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VIETNAM — that scab we have been picking at now for a decade — turns out, after all, to be cancer. The whole family is terribly concerned. The doctors believe that slow treatment composed of a little bleeding on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, transfusions on Tuesday and Thursday, and the weekend for recuperation may dissolve the bloody mass. If not that, then mustard plasters on alternate Saturdays and corn pads every Sunday morning.

Herr Doktor Agnew thinks that the disease is psychosomatic and will go away if we ignore it; Shaman Abbie Hoffman favors exorcism. Various renowned physicians in between recommend hypnosis, ice packs, vitamin C and a change in diet.

Yes, years ago other treatment was possible, but now . . . now . . . the disease and the diseased are inseparable. Final relief will only come with death and defeat.

THAT IS THE diagnosis of *In the Year of the Pig* — a straightforward, cinematically low-keyed documentary about American involvement in Vietnam. The director, Emile de Antonio, has made two other documentaries, one on the McCarthy hearings, *Point of Order*, the other on President Kennedy's assassination, *Rush to Judgment*.

Its perspective is historical; its position against. There are no new facts. Any standard history or commentary like that of Senator Fulbright, Bernard Fall, Roger Hilsman or Richard Goodwin would be equally as informative.

Nonetheless, *In the Year of the Pig* has an impact that these very often complex, contradictory and analytic works do not. The image on the screen is less nuanced, less set in a context, but that is exactly the movie's strength. Put directly in contact with the event of the speaker the

# The scab turns out to be cancer

viewer is required to make a judgment rather than accept one. Even to my prejudiced eyes Johnson seems more pitiful than criminal, Dulles more scholarly than sinister, and Daniel Berrigan more rational than prophetic.

Most of the events and personages are there: from the defeat of the Japanese in Vietnam at the end of World War II to the movie's end at an unspecified time period somewhere between the "election" of the Thieu-Ky government in the South and the bombing halt in the North; from Paul Mus, General De Gaulle's negotiator with Ho Chi Minh, to Henry Cabot Lodge.

Among the more interesting observations are those of Senator Thurston B. Morton (R. Ky.). He points out, for example, in the course of a long interview "that Ho Chi Minh, communist or what-not, is considered by the people of Vietnam, and I'm speaking of millions in South Vietnam, as the George Washington of his country." Out of the mouth of a Republican senator!

In addition to these interviews there is footage of American and South Vietnamese officials — Johnson, Nixon, Humphrey, Rusk, Eisenhower, Diem, Madame Nhu, etc. — making comments or announcements about the war. The unadorned editing of these clips is a good example of how cinematically low-keyed the film is. We do not see Johnson picking his nose. The CIA agent has a pleasant smile. Announcements about escalation are not followed by pictures of napalmed children.

THE FILM is against the war and unobtrusively sympathetic to Ho Chi Minh, the NLF and other anti-Saigon South Vietnamese. The film is politically partisan: some critics have categorized it as propaganda. Their presumption seems to be that a movie that would "balance"

the rights and wrongs on either side, even if in real life those rights and wrongs are not balanced, would not be propaganda.

But what does one do to balance Curtis Le May? "We must be willing to continue our bombing until we have destroyed every work of man in North Vietnam, if this is what it takes to win the war." To achieve Spiro Agnew's beloved objectivity should we invent a North Vietnamese general who threatens to annihilate

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The contrast between the two sides is strikingly, if curiously, illustrated by two unrelated sequences in the film.

An American army officer in the South points out during an interview that his men shoot on sight any Vietnamese carrying a gun: obviously they must be Viet Cong.

At the end of the film, American observers who visited the North during the bombing remarked the common sight of people walking armed on the street. The North Vietnamese themselves pointed with pride to that fact. "One of the most practical evidences of the truth that this government speaks for us is that the government has armed us to the point where if we wanted we could bring the government down in a day."

Americans, who fight so desperately for their right to keep and bear arms, might ponder the paradox of our stripping the Southerner of his gun in the name of Freedom, while the Northerner is armed by a communist dictatorship to preserve his own slavery.